

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY L/PM: J H SMITH:RR

APPROVED BY L: L R MARKS

EUR W LUERS

EUR/SOV M LEVITSKY

NSC R BARTHOLAMEW

S/MS M SHULMAN

S/S - FWISNER

HA:CBRODY

-----012508 032345Z /61

R 032311Z MAY 78 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T STATE 113178

NODIS

E.O. 11652:XGDS 1, 2

TAGS: SHUM, GW, UR

SUBJECT: DISCUSSIONS WITH VOGEL CONCERNING RELEASE OF
SHCHARANSKIY

1. ON THURSDAY, APRIL 27, VOGEL MET WITH CONGRESSMAN GILMAN
TO DISCUSS DETAILS OF VAN NORMAN-THOMPSON TRADE IN BERLIN.
THE SUBJECT OF SHCHARANSKY WAS ALSO DISCUSSED. ATTENDING
THE MEETING WERE CONGRESSMAN GILMAN, KALMANOWITCH, VOGEL,
BECKER (GILMAN'S AA) AND JEFFREY SMITH (L/PM) AS AN OBSERVER.

2. THE DISCUSSION FOLLOWED A LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF THE
POSSIBILITY OF A LUNT-LEBRON TRADE DURING WHICH LAWYERS FOR
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LUNT WERE ALSO IN THE ROOM. HOWEVER, THEY LEFT FOR DIS-
CUSSION OF SHCHARANSKY.

3. VOGEL SAID THAT HIS COMMENTS ON SHCHARANSKY WERE GIVEN
TO US IN "THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE". HE SAID THAT THE
SHCHARANSKY SUBJECT WAS A HOT POLITICAL IRON. HE SAID
THE GDR HAD WORD FROM MOSCOW AT ONE POINT THAT IT WOULD BE

POSSIBLE TO RELEASE SHCHARANSKY IN RETURN FOR RELEASE OF CHILEAN COMMUNISTS HELD BY THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, MOSCOW HAD CHANGED ITS MIND. HE ADDED THAT THERE WOULD NOW HAVE TO BE A TRIAL OF SHCHARANSKY. HE SAID THAT HE KNEW WHY THE TRIAL HAD COME ABOUT, BUT THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO TELL US WHY BECAUSE HE WAS A GUEST IN OUR COUNTRY AND HE LIKED OUR COUNTRY. HE SAID THAT THE REASON WAS AN ALLEGED "LETTER" FROM THE PRESIDENT TO BREZHNEV. THAT LETTER ACCORDING TO VOGEL HAD MAINTAINED THAT SHCHARANSKY WAS INNOCENT AND HAD NO CONNECTION TO THE U.S., AND WAS NOT A SPY. THAT MADE MOSCOW WANT TO PROVE THAT SHCHARANSKY WAS A SPY, IT WAS A MATTER OF "THEIR PRESTIGE".

COMMENT: THERE WAS NO APRIL LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT TO BREZHNEV. VOGEL MAY HAVE A GARBLE OR BE REFERRING TO EARLIER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE STATEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT.

4. VOGEL SAID THAT SHCHARANSKY WAS NOW IN A DIFFICULT POSITION, BUT THAT HE (VOGEL) WILL TRY TO HELP. HE SAID THAT TODAY MOSCOW WANTS TO HAVE A TRIAL, BUT THAT COULD CHANGE TOMORROW. IF THERE WAS SUCH A CHANGE, HE WOULD SIGNAL US IMMEDIATELY. HE SAID THAT HE COULD MEDIATE THE MATTER, BUT IN SOME UNDEFINED WAY. HE SAID HE WOULD COMMUNICATE WITH US VIA KALMANOWITCH AS TO WHAT HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO, BUT SAID THAT HE WANTED TO STAY IN IT TO THE END.

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5. HE SAID THAT, AS FRANK MEFHAN UNDERSTOOD, HE BELIEVES THAT THE SOVIETS ARE "ALLERGIC" TO PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, AND SUCH STATEMENTS CAN ONLY BE HARMFUL.

6. ASKED TO CLARIFY WHAT HE MEANT WHEN HE SAID HE THOUGHT HE COULD MEDIATE, VOGEL SAID THAT HE WAS THINKING OF THE CHILEANS WHO MIGHT BE HELD BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CHILE. HE REFERRED TO A LIST GIVEN HIM BY MINISTER MEEHAN, BUT SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN AMNESTY AND IT WOULD TAKE HIM ABOUT FOUR WEEKS TO FIND OUT WHO ON THAT LIST MIGHT STILL BE IN PRISON AND OF INTEREST TO THE EXILED COMMUNISTS. IN RESPONSE TO OTHER QUESTIONS, HE CONFIRMED THAT THAT LIST WAS THE ONE GIVEN TO HIM BY MEEHAN IN THE SUMMER 1977, AND THAT THE U.S. SHOULD DO NOTHING AT THIS POINT, BUT WAIT TO SEE WHAT MOSCOW DOES. IN THE MEANTIME, VOGEL ADDED, THAT HE WOULD TRY TO SEE WHAT MIGHT BE DONE ABOUT THE CHILEANS AND WOULD COMMUNICATE HIS "PROPOSALS" TO US.

7. COMMENT: VOGEL'S STATEMENTS WERE CONSISTENT WITH THE SOVIET LINE THAT ANY STATEMENT BY THE U.S. ON HUMAN RIGHTS, AND IN PARTICULAR CONCERNING SHCHARANSKY, WAS

HARMFUL. ALTHOUGH VOGEL SAID HE WAS GIVING GILMAN THIS
INFORMATION "IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE", WE BELIEVE HE
(OR THE SOVIETS) MAY WELL HOPE THAT HIS COMMENTS WOULD
APPEAR IN THE PRESS SO AS TO DISCOURAGE OFFICIAL U.S.
CRITICISM OF SOVIET HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES. WE ARE SKEPTICAL
ABOUT VOGEL'S USEFULNESS AS A FUTURE CHANNEL ON THE
SHCHARANSKY CASE. BUT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO LISTEN TO HIM.
CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

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